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ASSOCIATION OF COMMUTER RAIL EMPLOYEES

Statement of the Association of Commuter Rail Employees
Transportation Committee
February 27, 2023

Senator Cohen, Representative Lemar, Senator Hwang, Representative Kennedy and members of the committee:

My name is Daryl Johnson. I am legislative director for Local 1 of the Association of Commuter Rail Employees (ACRE), and would like to offer comments on two bills, Senate Bill 1078 and Senate Bill 1082.

Our members are conductors, engineers, signalmen and other crafts, who played a major role in keeping Metro-North Rail service running during the pandemic where we went to work every day. We lost several members to this virus—but we never backed away from serving our customers.

ACRE appreciates your commitment to having a robust commuter rail system in Connecticut. Governor Ned Lamont's "Time for CT" initiative will shorten transit times by improving tracks, signals and making more station improvements through hundreds of millions of dollars being invested in this initiative. Early positive results are being seen: service was expanded last July with six new express trains to Grand Central Terminal and nine new trains on the Waterbury branch

Senate Bill 1078: This will require DoT to put the management of the Shoreline East Rail Line to a competitive bid. ACRE strongly supports this provision. We believe, in fact, that our experience and knowledge could be an asset in the event a new vendor is chosen. The bill also calls for DoT to acquire new rail cars for the Waterbury and Danbury branches as well as provide for additional stops and stations in several towns. I can tell you that the demand for service in those areas continues to increase. More stations will result in more riders, but we fully realize that the upgrade will cost dollars and this needs to be balanced against other competing budget demands.

Senate Bill 1082: This is the Department of Transportation's legislation, a part of which will broaden the commuter rail council into a new public transportation council. We appreciate the fact that one of the appointees made by the governor will be a resident who regularly commutes on the New Haven Railroad Line.

In conclusion, our job is to get our passengers to their destinations safely and on-time. I maintain that our members do this job well and they do it with a very high degree of professionalism. This is happening despite one of the most difficult times in our history.

Thank you for considering the views of the Association of Commuter Rail Employees (ACRE) on these two bills.